

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8329

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION USBERLIN

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 03388

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, WB, UR

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE DELIVERIES OF SOVIET NATURAL GAS
TO WEST BERLIN

REF: A. BONN 792; B. USBERLIN 326; C. BONN 3137

1. THE FRG HAS GIVEN A GREAT DEAL OF THOUGHT TO HOW
TO RESPOND TO SOVIET AMBASSADOR FALIN'S OFFER TO
DISCUSS THE DELIVERY OF NATURAL GAS FROM THE SOVIET
UNION TO WEST BERLIN (REF A, PARA 3). A MAJOR
CONSIDERATION HAS BEEN TO AVOID THE INVOLVEMENT OF
THIS ISSUE IN THE MARCH 2 BERLIN ELECTION. THE
CONCERN IS THAT IN THE HEAT OF THE CAMPAIGN SOME
POLITICIANS MIGHT BALLYHOO THE PROSPECT OF NATURAL
GAS SUPPLIES BEING MADE AVAILABLE TO THE WEST
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BERLINERS AND MIGHT MAKE RASH STATEMENTS OR PROMISES

WHICH WOULD SEVERELY RESTRICT THE FRG'S FLEXIBILITY
IN ANY SUBSEQUENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

2. ANOTHER CONCERN IS THE COST OF THE INVESTMENT
INVOLVED. A PIPELINE NETWORK UNDER WEST BERLIN
WOULD HAVE TO BE CONSTRUCTED. NEW APPLIANCES WOULD
HAVE TO BE PURCHASED AND UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANKS
FOR RESERVES WOULD HAVE TO BE BUILT. THESE COSTS
COULD RANGE FROM DM500 MILLION TO 1 BILLION AND
MIGHT MAKE THE PRICE OF NATURAL GAS TO THE END
CONSUMER UNCOMPETITIVE WITH OTHER SOURCES OF ENERGY.
IN ADDITION THERE IS THE PROBLEM OF DEPENDENCE
ON SUPPLIES FROM THE SOVIET UNION.

3. THE FRG INTENDS TO RESPOND TO AMBASSADOR FALIN'S
REMARK WITH A SERIES OF QUESTIONS; WHAT QUANTITIES
DID THE USSR HAVE IN MIND, WHAT PRICE, WHAT QUALITIES
OF GAS, WHERE WOULD THE PIPELINE GO, WHEN DOES THE
USSR ENVISAGE THE DELIVERIES WOULD BEGIN, ETC. IT
IS THOUGHT THAT ECONOMICS MINISTER FRIDERICH'S MIGHT
RAISE THESE QUESTIONS DURING HIS VISIT TO MOSCOW ON
MARCH 13.

4. THIS INFORMATION WAS PASSED TO US BILATERALLY
IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE. AT THIS VERY EARLY
EXPLORATORY STAGE, THE FRG HAS DECIDED TO CLARIFY
THE ISSUES FURTHER WITH THE SOVIETS BEFORE RAISING
THIS FORMALLY WITH THE ALLIES.
HILLENBRAND

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